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VELVET GRASS (*Holcus lanatus*).

The only part of the United States in which velvet grass occurs to an extent worthy of notice is on the Pacific coast west of the Cascade Mountains, from northern California to the Canadian line. In that section it is indifferently called velvet grass and mesquite. The latter name should never be applied to this grass, as it is used for several other very different grasses in the Southwest.

It is generally regarded as a pest on the Pacific coast, particularly on lands that are very wet in winter and very dry in summer. This is especially the case with both sandy and peaty soils. It is not utilized for feed in many localities, but on the extensive areas of very sandy land around the mouth of the Columbia River and at one or two points inland it is the chief hay and pasture grass. It is unworthy of attention in this region except on the classes of soils just mentioned. On these soils it drives out all other grasses. The yield ordinarily is about one-half ton of hay per acre. The hay is remarkable for its lightness, a ton of it being much more bulky than a like weight of other kinds of hay. Horses and cattle nearly starve before they acquire a taste for velvet grass, but when the taste is once acquired they thrive upon it remarkably well, showing that it is highly nutritious. The aversion which stock have for the plant is no doubt caused by the growth of wool-like hairs, from which characteristic the grass derives its name.

The value of velvet grass in the East has not been definitely determined. Some Virginia stockmen have found the grass useful on the poor clay soils of that State where timothy and other grasses are unable to withstand the weed growth. Its aggressiveness enables it to occupy the ground completely in situations where other grasses would be overcome by weeds within two or three years from planting. This ability enables farmers to have a permanent pasture under conditions where otherwise it would be impossible. Velvet grass is also found useful in some locations for holding embankments and preventing washing on hillsides.

Velvet grass is frequently a pest in meadows. The seed matures very early, is light, and shatters readily. When clover, rye-grass, and timothy are ready to be cut for hay the seed of velvet grass is usually mature enough to germinate. The wind blows the seed, and wherever the hay is hauled the seed is scattered. If a meadow that is infested with velvet grass is cut a little early for either hay or ensilage, the seed can not be spread in this way. Velvet grass gives no trouble in the second crop of clover, which, if cut early, matures for hay in the early part of August. Fence rows and waste places beside meadows should be mowed early enough to prevent seed from maturing. If these precautions are taken, the grass can be kept from becoming very troublesome.

Eradication.—To eradicate velvet grass cut it early, before the seed is ripe, generally June 10 to 20. About July 1 give the field a thorough but shallow disking. Repeat the shallow disking every week until August 1, and then treat with a spring-tooth harrow and disk again. The shallow cultivation during the driest weather will kill the roots and leave the ground with a very fine mulch on top and plenty of moisture in the subsoil. The land may then be reseeded to clover or planted to any crop desired.

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